

REPORT
about completing an internship
for the period from 01.09.2025 to 30.11.2025
within the framework of the project "Nature for Resilience - a biosphere network for
veteran recovery" DAAD East-West Dialogue Programme
on the topic «**From War to Restoration: Exploring Nature-Based Recovery and
Reskilling for Ukrainian Veterans in Protected Areas**»

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Introduction

As of January 2025, Ukraine's population stands at around 31.5 million. Of this number, 1.85 million are veterans of all genders.

Veterans in Ukraine report poorer mental health and greater difficulties in adapting to civilian life: in 2025, only 37% rated their mental health as good, and 65% of veterans reported that they found it difficult to return to civilian life. At the same time, 63% of veterans and 69% of military personnel have never sought psychological help. However, the demand for such services among veterans is growing and even increases with age. Veterans with disabilities are most open to psychological help: 38% would like to receive free psychological support.

Given these data, there is currently a significant need to create a variety of opportunities for the rehabilitation of veterans, their families, and active military personnel. With the opportunity to use the most harmonious way to restore their mental health, namely nature, it is necessary to find the most appropriate and effective ways to solve this problem.

In this regard, practical experience with programmes aimed at psychological support and social rehabilitation of veterans is particularly relevant. During the internship, the focus was on studying and applying approaches that combine psychological assistance with natural environment resources. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the target group's needs and an assessment of the effectiveness of non-pharmacological methods of mental health recovery.

Research objective

To explore the potential of nature-based programmes in biosphere reserves as a tool for the rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of veterans in Ukraine, integrating international experience and promoting the development of a platform for cooperation in this area.

Goals:

1. To analyse international experience in the field of nature-based rehabilitation of veterans.
2. To study current Ukrainian initiatives in the field of mental health and vocational training for veterans.
3. To propose a model for using biosphere reserves as centres for comprehensive support for veterans.
4. Participate in the development of an online platform for international cooperation, knowledge exchange and the creation of educational resources.

The research methodology consists of:

- ✓ reviewing international and Ukrainian research literature on veterans' recovery in nature and the development of green skills;
- ✓ studying thematic initiatives on the rehabilitation and reintegration of veterans in nature;
- ✓ participation in the workshop 'Biosphere Network for Veteran Recovery';
- ✓ practical contribution to the online platform 'Protected Area Research Community for Ukrainian Recovery' (PARCUR) by creating digital content and material for knowledge sharing.

Literature review

After reviewing the literature on this topic, it can be noted that studies confirm the generally accepted understanding that spending time in nature is one of the most reliable ways to reduce stress indicators such as heart rate and blood pressure.

Barbara Kreski¹ describes in her article a pilot programme in which the Chicago Botanic Garden used the stress-reducing properties of nature to supplement a programme for treating veterans with stress-related disorders. Feedback on the programme, obtained from individual observations, was extremely positive.

In the pilot research, Christine Bellotti et al.² examined the mental health and quality of life outcomes achieved by 17 OIF/OEF (Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation Enduring Freedom), who participated in the first cohort of the Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) green jobs training programme at Green River Community College in Auburn, Washington. Preliminary results indicate that participation in the VCC may help improve the social and physical functioning of OIF/OEF veterans.

A qualitative research by Dorthe Varning Poulsen et al.³ aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between nature-based therapy for veterans with PTSD from the veteran's perspective. Eight Danish veterans participated in 10 weeks of nature-based therapy. Qualitative interviews were conducted and analysed using an interpretative phenomenological method. The results showed that veterans gained tools to use in stressful situations and experienced an improvement in their PTSD symptoms.

The number of traumatic disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), is increasing worldwide. Jenny L. Laverdure's⁴ work examines the types of nature-based interventions, the theories underlying these treatment methods, summarises research on current nature therapy programmes, and discusses how these types of interventions are beneficial to veterans. This article introduces a new programme called Project H.O.M.E. (Healing Outdoors through Mindful Experiences), which uses a variety of nature-based interventions along with dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) skills to treat PTSD in veterans.

An article by Mark B. Detweiler et al.⁵ also presents some data confirming the value of the natural environment as a therapeutic tool. Restorative natural environments, including outdoor gardens and rehabilitation greenhouses, can be effective components of multidisciplinary treatment plans for veterans with multiple medical and psychiatric problems.

¹ Kreski, B. (2016). Healing and Empowering Veterans in a Botanic Garden. *Journal of Museum Education*, 41(2), 110–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2016.1169734>

² Bellotti C, Laffaye C, Weingardt KR, Fischer M, Schumacher T. Re-visioning veteran readjustment: Evaluating outcomes of a green-jobs training program. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*. 2011;35(1):51-57. doi:[10.3233/JVR-2011-0553](https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-2011-0553)

³ Poulsen DV, Stigsdotter UK, Djernis D, Sidenius U. 'Everything just seems much more right in nature': How veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder experience nature-based activities in a forest therapy garden. *Health Psychology Open*. 2016;3(1). doi:[10.1177/2055102916637090](https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102916637090)

⁴ Laverdure, Jenny L., Project H.O.M.E: A Novel Nature-based Therapy Approach for the Treatment of Veterans with Trauma (2022). Psychology Doctoral Specialization Projects. 19. https://encompass.eku.edu/psych_doctorals/19

⁵ Mark B. Detweiler, MD, MS, Taral Sharma, MD, MBA, Sandra Lane, MS, Mintai Kim, PhD, Benjamin C. Johnson, ASLA, and Kye Y. Kim, MD. The Case for Using Restorative Natural Environments in Veterans' Rehabilitation Programs. *Federal Practitioner*. 2010 January;27(1):26. <https://cdn-uat.mdedge.com/files/s3fs-public/Document/September-2017/027010026.pdf>

A thematic research combining nature therapy and group therapy in a long-term group adventure therapy programme for veterans with chronic PTSD is presented in an article by Shai Shorer, Maitri Shacham & Boaz Bloch⁶. The results indicate that nature-based therapy is a promising adjunctive intervention, especially for clients who have not achieved sufficient improvement with other individual or trauma-focused therapies.

Regarding Ukrainian research on this issue, we can mention the article by Tetyana Semigina et al.⁷ This work presents the results of a study devoted to the social needs of ex-combatants in Ukraine and ways of their social reintegration.

The following research have a broader scope but are directly or indirectly related to the topic of veteran rehabilitation.

The research by Luis Enrique Loria-Rebolledo et al.⁸ characterised how green, blue or open spaces are used by NHS Scotland and calculated the economic value derived from leisure and recreation in different open spaces for different users.

The work of Gladys Barragan-Jason et al.⁹ provides a systematic review of the 'connection' between humans and nature, focusing on recent meta-analyses that examine the impact of psychological and/or physical connection with nature on human health and well-being, as well as on attitudes and actions that promote nature conservation. Correlational studies have confirmed the experimental results and, in addition, found that psychological connection with nature is positively correlated with mental and physical health.

The report 'Biodiversity and health JRC TECHNICAL REPORT' by Prakash Sona et al.¹⁰ proves that biodiversity and health are inextricably linked, both directly and indirectly.

The article by Carly W. Butler et al.¹¹ highlights aspects of citizen science research and the impact of citizen science on connection with nature and well-being. The Great Butterfly Count programme describes an increase in connection with nature and observation of nature and butterflies, as well as a decrease in anxiety. By improving the relationship between humans and nature, citizen science also makes an important contribution to the conservation of biodiversity.

The article by Michael J. O. Pocock et al.¹² describes several experiments to test the impact

⁶ Shorer, S., Shacham, M., & Bloch, B. (2023). Long-Term Group Nature-Assisted Therapy for Veterans Diagnosed with Chronic PTSD. *Social Work with Groups*, 46(3), 235-248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01609513.2023.2173358>

⁷ Semigina, T., Kachmaryk, A., & Karagodina, O. (2021). Analysing Social Needs of the Ukrainian Ex-Combatants: Looking on The Lived Experience. *Path of Science*, 7(6), 3001-3011. <https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.71-4>

⁸ Loria-Rebolledo, L.E., Boyers, D., Watson, V., Antunes, M., & Chalmers, N. (2025). Valuing the health and wellbeing value of NHS Scotland's outdoor estate: How are NHS Scotland open spaces used and what is their value to the Scottish population. *SEFARI Gateway Research Report*. <https://doi.org/10.57064/2164/25103>

⁹ Gladys Barragan-Jason, Michel Loreau, Claire de Mazancourt, Michael C. Singer, Camille Parmesan, Psychological and physical connections with nature improve both human well-being and nature conservation: A systematic review of meta-analyses, *Biological Conservation*, Volume 277, 2023, 109842, ISSN 0006-3207, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2022.109842>

¹⁰ Prakash, S., Estreguil, C., Neuville, A., Chinchio, E. and Baccaro, M., Biodiversity and health, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.2760/174144>, JRC134740

¹¹ C.W. Butler, I. Hamlin, M. Richardson, M. Lowe, R. Fox, Connection for conservation: The impact of counting butterflies on nature connectedness and wellbeing in citizen scientists, *Biological Conservation*, Volume 292, 2024, 110497, ISSN 0006-3207, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2024.110497>

¹² Pocock, M. J. O., Hamlin, I., Christelow, J., Passmore, H.-A., & Richardson, M. (2023). The benefits of citizen science and nature- noticing activities for well- being, nature connectedness and pro- nature conservation behaviours. *People and Nature*, 5, 591-606. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10432>

of nature-focused activities on people's connection to nature and well-being.

The research by Maria E. White et al.¹³ examines the effect of brief bird watching on well-being, anxiety, and connection to nature. The results suggest that the activation of feelings of joy enhances the psychological benefits of observing garden birds. These benefits and the strengthening of the connection with nature highlight the interdependence between humans and birds, as well as the importance of actions for healthy, sustainable urban ecosystems.

In the work 'Economic burden of low physical activity and high sedentary behaviour in Finland,' authors Päivi Kolu et al.¹⁴ examined the direct and indirect costs associated with low physical activity and high levels of sedentary behaviour in Finland in 2017. The results of the research show that low physical activity and high levels of sedentary behaviour generate significant social costs. Therefore, actions aimed at increasing physical activity and reducing excessive sedentary behaviour throughout life can not only improve health but also generate significant savings for society.

The work of Julie Whitburn et al.¹⁵ explains that understanding what drives environmentally protective or destructive behaviour is important for the development and implementation of effective public policies aimed at encouraging people to engage in pro-environmental behaviour (PEB).

The research 'Volunteer health and emotional wellbeing in marine protected areas' by Rebecca Sarah Koss and Jonathon "Yotti" Kingsley¹⁶ focuses on the emotional attitudes of Sea Search volunteers who monitor marine national parks and marine reserves in Victoria, Australia. The volunteers noted that their participation in Sea Search brought them positive emotional and mental outcomes, active learning such as memorising the names of marine biota, and stimulation of brain activity and memory. The volunteers' monitoring efforts brought personal satisfaction through their contribution, sense of fulfilment, and interaction with others.

Therefore, the analysed literature indicates a sustained positive impact of interaction with the natural environment on the mental, physical and social well-being of individuals, particularly veterans with PTSD and other traumatic disorders. Research confirm the effectiveness of nature-based therapies as a standalone or complementary component of rehabilitation programmes, contributing to stress reduction, improved quality of life and social functioning. The formation of a psychological connection with nature also plays an important role, as it is associated with better health, increased physical activity and pro-environmental behaviour. In addition to individual benefits, interaction with nature has social and economic value, reducing costs associated with sedentary lifestyles and poor health.

¹³ White, M.E., Hamlin, I., Butler, C.W. *et al.* The Joy of birds: the effect of rating for joy or counting garden bird species on wellbeing, anxiety, and nature connection. *Urban Ecosyst* 26, 755–765 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11252-023-01334-y>

¹⁴ Kolu P, Kari JT, Raitanen J, Sievänen H, Tokola K, Havas E, Pehkonen J, Tammelin TH, Pahkala K, Hutri-Kähönen N, Raitakari OT, Vasankari T. Economic burden of low physical activity and high sedentary behaviour in Finland. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2022 Jul;76(7):677-684. doi: 10.1136/jech-2021-217998. Epub 2022 Apr 26. PMID: 35473717; PMCID: PMC9209672

¹⁵ Whitburn J, Linklater W, Abrahamse W. Meta-analysis of human connection to nature and proenvironmental behavior. *Conserv Biol*. 2020 Feb;34(1):180-193. doi: 10.1111/cobi.13381. Epub 2019 Jul 12. PMID: 31251416; PMCID: PMC7027494

¹⁶ Rebecca Sarah Koss, Jonathon 'Yotti' Kingsley, Volunteer health and emotional wellbeing in marine protected areas, *Ocean & Coastal Management*, Volume 53, Issue 8, 2010, Pages 447-453, ISSN 0964-5691, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2010.06.002>

Description of the seminar 'Biosphere Network for Veterans' Recovery'

As part of the DAAD 2025 East-West Dialogue Programme, a workshop was held on the topic of 'Biosphere Network for Veteran Rehabilitation'. The event took place from 27 to 31 October 2025 in Rakhiv (Ukraine). I also had the opportunity to attend and talk to practitioners who run existing programmes for the rehabilitation of veterans in nature and beyond.

The workshop 'Biosphere Network for Veteran Rehabilitation' was intense and interesting. Participants included representatives of higher education institutions (Kyiv School of Economics, National Transport University, Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development), nature conservation organisations (Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, National Nature Park 'Hohliivskyi', Chernobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve), public and other organisations (NGO ForestCom, Young Veterans Ukraine, Volunteer Travels, International Organization for Migration), veterans, active military personnel, volunteers and other interested parties, .

On the first, fourth and fifth days of the workshop, participants had the opportunity to learn about the activities of the organisations represented by their colleagues, their achievements and experience in the field of rehabilitation opportunities for veterans both in Ukraine and abroad. Presentations were given by:

- on the topic of 'Volunteering in nature conservation areas as a way to rehabilitate veterans and their families,' Andriy Khrutba, as a military man who works directly with the military, veterans, and their families, gave examples of problems faced by veterans when they return to civilian life and possible solutions, involving them in volunteering and work in nature conservation areas;
- representatives of the public organisation Forest Initiatives and Society ForestCom. They talked about their current and future projects, programmes and events for veterans, their families, internally displaced persons and anyone else who is interested;
- representatives of the Veterans Office of the Kyiv School of Economics introduced the audience to educational and business opportunities for veterans;
- Natalia Kharitonova, a practical psychologist, and Volodymyr Ustymenko, a lecturer, both employees of Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, shared their experiences with the educational and psychological aspects of veteran rehabilitation;
- Madeleine Küssel, a student at the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, spoke about 'Forest Therapy' and explained the beneficial effects of forests on physical, psychological and social health. This type of therapy can be described in one sentence by Yoshifumi Miyazaki: 'Forest therapy is enjoying the atmosphere of the forest and perceiving nature with all your senses.'
- Oksana Alekseeva, advisor to the Ministry of Veterans, on the topic: 'The Young Veterans. Ukraine' platform, Patronage Service of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, NGO 'SMART MEDIA' and NGO 'TIME FOR ACTION', about the communication platform for the socialisation of veterans, working with young people, veterans, psychological support, job search assistance, veterans' businesses, organising a training system for veterans and creating a network of proactive veterans' communities;
- Alina Kosovska, representative of the NGO Volunteer Travels, spoke about her experience of running volunteer camps for military personnel in the mountains;
- Serhiy Khara, an employee of the National Nature Park 'Hohliivskyi', shared the national park's experience in rehabilitating veterans using nature therapy and, in collaboration with

the National University of Physical Education and Sports of Ukraine, through mountain skiing sports;

- Vitaliy Svatko, representative of the National Transport University, spoke about the possibility of cooperation between universities and communities and institutions of the nature reserve fund institutions, the exchange of ideas on helping veterans and their families, and the formation of communities using digital platforms;
- Nadiya Tserkun, a leading specialist at the IOM's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in western and southern Ukraine, spoke about measures to support veterans and their families;
- an employee of the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve introduced participants to the SMART platform, which is used by inspectors, scientists, and volunteers to document the work of the state protection service, record violations of the reserve regime, identify threats and their impact on the reserve territory, observe plants and animals, and create databases;
- Julius Strauss, a former military correspondent, spoke about a rehabilitation camp for veterans in Canada, which was also attended by Ukrainian veterans and combat medics;
- Yulia Nikitchenko, project manager at the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development, familiarised participants with the financial opportunities for veteran projects both in Ukraine and abroad, as well as the main stages and risks involved in project development and implementation;
- Valery Malyarenko, an employee of the Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve, spoke about the opportunities and features of financing projects under the Horizon Europe programme.

The second day provided an opportunity for those interested to visit the high-altitude shelter 'Perelisok,' where therapeutic camps for military personnel are held.

'Perelisok' is more than just a mountain shelter. It is a space for anyone seeking comfort, tranquillity, and harmony with nature. The shelter team welcomes travellers, guides, soldiers, volunteers, and simply good people who are looking for peace in the mountains.

The purpose of the shelter is to spend time in harmony with nature, where there is natural food and conversations around the campfire. Here, there is concern for the environment, for inner peace, and for every guest of this space.

The shelter has everything you need for a comfortable stay: rooms for overnight stays or the option of camping in a tent, a self-service kitchen, spring water, electricity and Wi-Fi in the evenings, a sports ground, a library, a gazebo and healing nature: forests, mountain meadows, clouds and sunrises.

You can visit the picturesque trails of the Svidovets massif accompanied by a guide. Individual trips or group tours are available.

Ski and hiking equipment rental, a shop with useful items, freeze-dried food, energy bars, Carpathian tea and souvenirs can also be found on site.

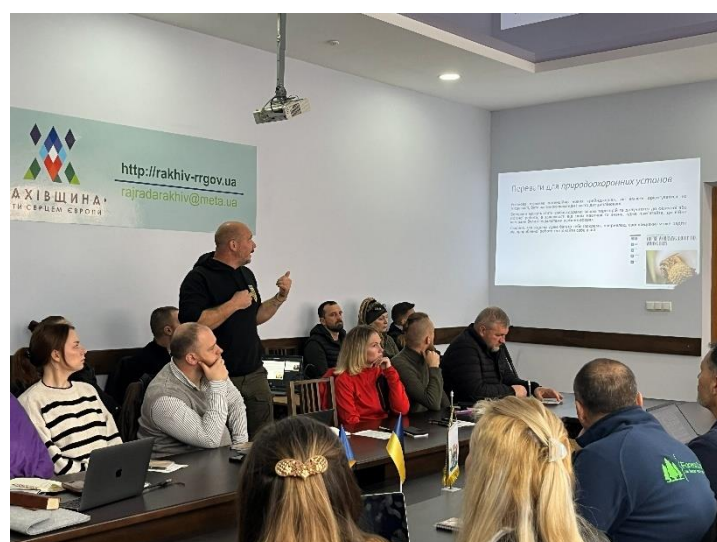


Fig. 1. Photos from the presentations given by workshop participants.



Fig. 2. Photos from an excursion to the tourist shelter 'Perelisok'.

On the third day of the workshop, participants had the opportunity to voice and analyse, using the **DIY4Change method**, the problems and challenges faced by veterans and their families after returning to civilian life, as well as by nature conservation institutions, communities and higher education establishments. The next step was to generate ideas, identify target groups, and analyse the opportunities and risks in possible projects for the rehabilitation of veterans through nature.

Description of the method

The method was developed by #DIY4Change NGO #FRGS #KovalenkoOlexiy.

Scope of application of the method. The DIY4Change methodology focuses on analysing the project environment for making management decisions when solving the problems of the target audience.

The aim of the DIY4Change method is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the decision-making process, as well as to activate public participation in this process.

Method structure. The DIY4Change method consists of two main stages:

Stage one: Application of the CivicLab methodology to develop proposals during public consultations. The CivicLab methodology includes a set of measures, such as needs assessment and selection of participants for the event according to established criteria.

Stage two: Introducing innovative information and communication technologies in the process of developing and adopting effective decisions based on proposals received during consultations.

Methodology of application. The DIY4Change methodology uses a set of digital tools consisting of four application components. This allows combining the digital component with educational and gaming components, increasing the effectiveness of the decision-making process and the level of public engagement.

Expected outcome. The application of the DIY4Change methodology, in particular the use of the CivicLab methodology, will contribute to the development of high-quality proposals that can form the basis for the development of alternative strategic decisions. This, in turn, will help to reduce conflict situations in society that arise as a result of unilateral decision-making and formal implementation of decisions by authorities without taking into account the opinion of the community.

Scope of application of the methodology. The proposed D4C methodology focuses on practical communication management in distributed environmental projects. The methodology is intended for use by the project centre (PC) initiating the environmental project to ensure effective communication with project participants (PP). The methodology is most useful at the project initiation stage to minimise the risk of communication barriers.

Purpose of the methodology. The main purpose of the D4C methodology is to develop a plan for coordinated communication management in distributed environmental projects, given the lack of clear information about the real state of internal and external stakeholder interests. Structure of the methodology. The implementation of the proposed methodology involves two main stages:

1. First stage: Developing a stakeholder management strategy. This stage includes:
 - identifying stakeholders in the environmental project;
 - creating a stakeholder register.
2. Stage two: Planning coordinated communications management. At this stage, the specific values of the identified stakeholders are determined.

Methodology of application. The use of the D4C methodology for each specific environmental project involves the formation of a clear list of all possible stakeholders and an assessment of their level of interest in the project results.

Expected results. The application of the D4C methodology ensures the development of a coordinated communication management plan for a specific distributed environmental project for stakeholders identified in the Stakeholder Register.

Preparatory stage. The preparatory stage of the methodology involves analysing the initial information necessary for its application:

- description of the problem that the project aims to solve, its level, scale, and possible damage;
- information about the source of the environmental problem;
- information about the impact on the environment and humans, as well as possible consequences;
- information about the existing local environmental management system for addressing this problem.

Thus, the D4C methodology is a comprehensive approach to communications management in distributed environmental projects, allowing for the development of a coordinated communications plan that takes into account the interests and capabilities of all stakeholders.

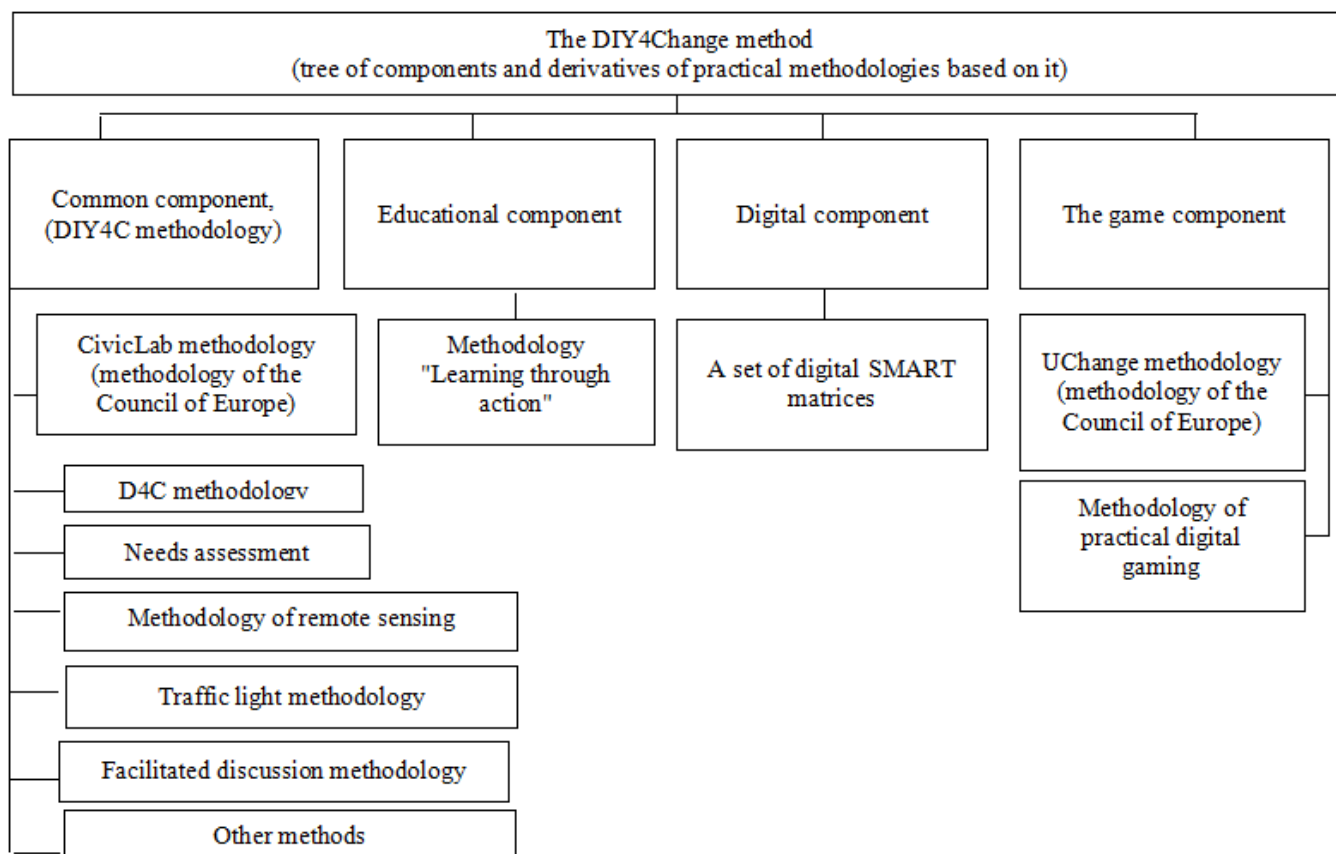


Fig. 3. Graphical representation of the DIY4Change method.

Working in teams using the DIY4Change method

At the beginning of the session, all participants registered and were divided into three teams. Each team had a moderator who kept track of time and recorded the ideas generated throughout the session. All results were then processed using a computer programme and presented in the following format (Fig. 4).

Сьогодні разом працюють

28

ФАЗА 0. Зареєструйте учасників та учасниць своєї групи											
Червоні				Жовті				Зелені			
ПІБ	Організація	ЦА	СТАТЬ	ПІБ	Організація	ЦА	СТАТЬ	ПІБ	Організація	ЦА	СТАТЬ
Устименко Володимир	ЖДТУ	ОРГ	Ч	Сватко Віталій	НТУ	ОРГ	Ч	Хрутьба Андрій	ЗСУ	ОРГ	Ч
Харитонюк Наталя	ЖДТУ	ВНЗ	Ж	Байклевць Діана	Київська школа економіки	ВНЗ	Ж	Адаменко Катерина	Київська школа економіки	ВНЗ	Ж
Карабчук Дмитро	НГО "форест Комп"	ПЗФ	Ч	Хара Сергій	НПП Голосівський	ПЗФ	Ч	Бундзяк Йосип	КБЗ	ПЗФ	Ч
Борик Олег	КБЗ	Ветерани	Ч	Козурак Алла	КБЗ	ПЗФ	Ж	Година Олег	НПП Голосівський	ПЗФ	Ж
Нікітченко Юлія	Університет Еберсвальде	ВНЗ	Ж	Мельничук Тарас	ЧРЕБЗ	ПЗФ	Ч	Косовська Аліна	ГО "Волонтерські мандрівки"	Ветерани	Ч
Бундзяк Вікторія	КБЗ	ПЗФ	Ч	Харачко Тарас	Лісотехнічний університет	ВНЗ	Ч	Телегазіт Віола	Великобичківська	ОМС	Ч
Маларенко Валерій	ЧРЕБЗ	ПЗФ	Ч	Рахівський Василь	Великобичківська	Ветерани	Ч	Скользящий Ігор	Розточчя	ПЗФ	Ч
Алексеева Оксана	Патронатна служба ВМС	Ветерани	Ж	Юраш Василь	КБЗ	ПЗФ	Ч	Ізмайлова Тетяна	Київська школа економіки	ВНЗ	Ч
Кухар Денис	КБЗ	ПЗФ	Ч	Копачук Іванна	КБЗ	ПЗФ	Ж	Глушаниця Михайло	НПП Голосівський	ПЗФ	Ж
Беднар Маріяна	КБЗ	ПЗФ	Ж								

Fig. 4. Registered participants and distribution by teams ('green', 'yellow', 'red').

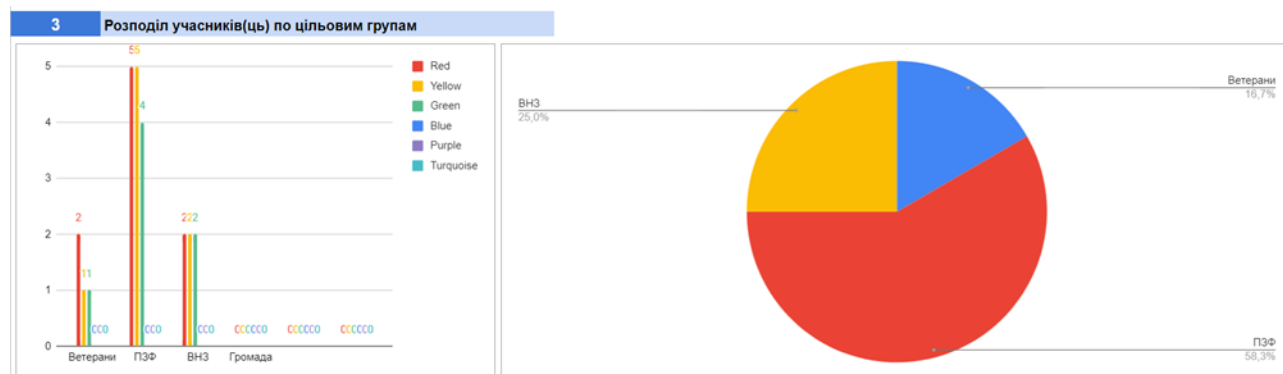


Fig. 5. Distribution of participants by target groups (veterans, representatives of the NRF, universities, communities).

The first stage was to identify challenges and needs, categorise them and prioritise them.

The challenges and needs of the 'green' team, which were identified as the most pressing and fall under the category of 'community' (Fig. 6):

1. Lack of a full cycle of inclusiveness and accessibility in institutions and organisations.
2. Lack of trained professionals and relevant specialists.
3. Bureaucratic processes, lack of adaptation of norms and laws, including in the field of NRF and universities.
4. Lack of inclusion of veterans in decision-making and implementation.
5. Weak or almost non-existent communication, interaction and exchange of experience and typical models of success both between different groups and within groups.
6. Minimal or no funding for project implementation and change implementation.
7. Lack of methodological, regulatory and normative support for institutions to implement changes and new policies/rules.

СЕСІЯ 1		02:16
3	1	2
Обрано	ВИКЛИКИ І ПОТРЕБИ	КАТЕГОРІЯ ВИКЛИКІВ І ПОТРЕБ До якої категорії відноситься ВИКЛИК / ПОТРЕБА?
1	Відсутність повного циклу інклюзивності, безбар'єрності в установах та організаціях	Громада
2	Відсутність навчених фахівців та відповідних спеціалістів	Громада
3	Бюрократичність процесів, відсутність адаптації норм та законів, включно в сфері ПЗФ та ЗВО	Громада
4	Відсутність включеності ветеранів в прийнятті рішень та їх реалізації	Громада
5	Слабка або майже відсутня комунікація, ВЗАЄМОДІЯ та обмін досвідом та типовими моделями успіху як між різними групами так і в групах між собою	Громада
6	Мінімальне або відсутнє фінансування для реалізації проектів та запровадження змін	Громада
7	Відсутнє методична, нормативна, регуляторна підтримка для установ для впровадження змін та нових політик/правил	Громада

Fig. 6. Selected and prioritised challenges and needs generated by the 'green' team.

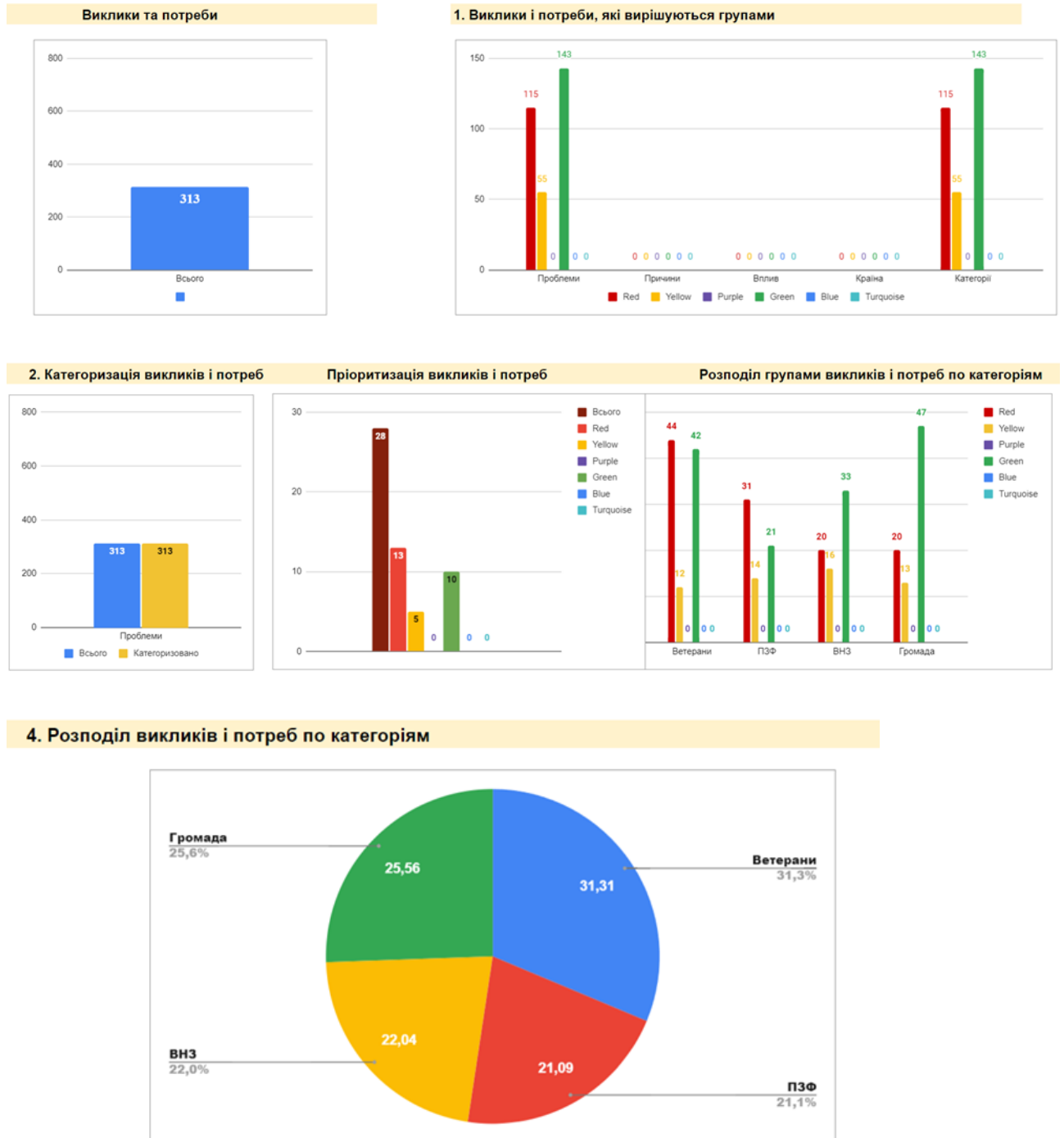


Fig. 7. Graphical representation of identified challenges and needs and their distribution across teams and categories.

The second part of the work process was the development of ideas and measures within the framework of the project.

05:34		СЕСІЯ 2			
5		1	2	3	4
ІДЕЇ АКТИВНОСТЕЙ / ЗАХОДІВ В РАМКАХ ПРОЄКТУ					
Обрано	Проекти в повсякденній діяльності ПЗФ. Елементи повсякденної діяльності ПЗФ, де можуть бути залучені ветерани, як одноразово, так і систематично.	КАТЕГОРІЯ ІДЕЙ	ОЧІКУВАНІ РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ	ПАРТНЕРИ	
Які ВИДИ АКТИВНОСТЕЙ можуть бути частиною програми?		оберіть категорію активності до якої відноситься ідея	Зазначте очікувані результати реалізації ідеї	Зазначте партнерів, які можуть сприяти реалізації ідеї	
3	Розробити стратегічну програму та підпрограми для ветеранів з інвалідністю та для родин ветеранів на території ПЗФ(вибрати які)	Документація			
4	Туристичні програми та тематичні напрямки для ветеранів та родин на території ПЗФ з залученням тур.організацій. Включно з волонтерською роботою для ПЗФ та виїздами в інші установи та з квестами та подіями	Інфраструктура	Створення інклюзивної мапи Створення сприятливих зелених маршрутів (зон) та місць для відпочинку та рекреації ветеранів. Обмін досвідом та навчання	ветеранські організації, психологи, працівники пзф	
9	Активності різні	Інше			
6	Робота на природних рекреаційних масивах	Інше			
9	Екотуризм та рекреація, включно із сплавами	Інше			
9	Адаптивний спорт (наприклад, гольф (будь де, хоч в лісі), спортивні активності на природі, каякінг, сап	Відновлення			
9	Розумний кінотеатр, книголав, театр, хор	Творчість		Активация Windows	
8	Терапія з тваринами (собаки, коні, птахи)	Відновлення		Перейдіть до розділу "Настройки", и	
5	Систематичні спільні активності вихідного дня, включно з інтелектуальним відпочинком та включно з містечками	Відновлення			
3	Обізнаність та збільшення популярності важливості таких відпочинків	Освіта			
5	Розроблення спільних стратегій разом з реабілітологами та іншими стейкхолдерами	Документація			
2	Навчання, семінари для подальшої роботи з ветеранами та їх сім'ями	Освіта			
1	Візит-центрів, хабів та розбудова інфраструктури в 10 ПЗФ та "інклюзивних кишенькових парків" та розробка туристичних маршрутів	Інфраструктура	хаби, де є можливість адаптивного спорту, мережа маршрутів, робота для волонтерів у віддалених куточках з своєю родзинкою та спільною концепцією З продуманою логістикою Враховуючі європейський досвід	ветеранські організації, психологи, працівники пзф, місцеві громади Активация Windows	
4	"Місце (в лісі) де ти можеш знайти своїх" там де завжди щось і хтось є	Інше	наявність таких місць в містах в доступності громадським транспортом, куди можна самостійно потрапити. Створення затишних скверів та місць відпочинку для подальшої рекреації ветеранів з відзнакою "тут вітають ветерана".	ветеранські організації, психологи, працівники пзф, місцеві громади	
	в програму ментального здоров'я "Ти як" включити лікування на природі. Ти як - біля дерева краще				
	Навчання з цивільної оборони				
	Типові парки 15хвилинної пішої доступності для відпочинку типу Самосад (Поділ)				
	Активність - створення "кишенькових парків" разом з ветеранами та підлітками				
	в кожному місці своя родзинка та спеціалізація			Активация Windows	
	Брендинг або відзнака "Тут вітають ветерана"			Перейдіть до розділу "Настройки", и	

Fig. 8. Ideas for activities and events that the green team can carry out as part of the project.

Next, the ideas were evaluated for feasibility. Using the example of the 'green' team, we ended up with three ideas for activities that were deemed feasible (Fig. 8, 9), namely:

1) creating tourist programmes and tourist destinations for veterans and their families in the territory of the NRF with the involvement of tourist organisations, including volunteer work for the NRF institution and trips to other institutions, with quests and events;

2) creating visitor centres, hubs and developing infrastructure in 10 NRF institutions and 'inclusive pocket parks', developing tourist routes;

3) creating 'places (in the forest) where you can find your own kind', where there is always something and someone.

06:21		СЕСІЯ 3						
4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
ПАРТНЕРИ	1. Відповідає потребам ветеранів?	2. Реально реалізувати в ПЗФ зараз?	3. Сильний ефект на відновлення/реабілітацію?	4. Це безпечно (низький ризик)?	5. Чи може охопити групу людей?	Висновок	Обрано	НОТАТКИ
Зазначте партнерів, які можуть сприяти реалізації ідеї								
ветеранські організації, психологи, працівники пзф	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Реалістична	☐	
ветеранські організації, психологи, працівники пзф, місцеві громади	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Реалістична	☐	
ветеранські організації, психологи, працівники пзф, місцеві громади	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Реалістична	☐	

Fig. 9. Determining the feasibility of the 'green' team's ideas.

05:45		СЕСІЯ 2		
5	1	2	3	4
Обрано	ІДЕЇ АКТИВНОСТЕЙ / ЗАХОДІВ В РАМКАХ ПРОЄКТУ	КАТЕГОРІЯ ІДЕЙ	ОЧІКУВАНІ РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ	ПАРТНЕРИ
	Проекти в повсякденній діяльності ПЗФ. Елементи повсякденної діяльності ПЗФ, де можуть бути залучені ветерани, як одноразово, так і систематично.	оберіть категорію активності до якої відноситься ідея	Зазначте очікувані результати реалізації ідеї	Зазначте партнерів, які можуть сприяти реалізації ідеї
	Які ВИДИ АКТИВНОСТЕЙ можуть бути частиною програми?			
1	Створення інклюзивного маршруту (в т.ч. ділянки форест терапії, мережа оглядових майданчиків, Створення локації для ретритів)	Інфраструктура	інклюзивний маршрут з усією інфраструктурою	Адміністрація ПЗФ, розробник проєкту, виконавці будівельних робіт та експерти з консультування, ветеранські організації, місцева адміністрація, спеціалізовані організації та ветерани з сім'ями
1	Створення спортивно-дитячого майданчику	Інфраструктура	спортивно-дитячий майданчик	Адміністрація ПЗФ, розробник проєкту, виконавці будівельних робіт та експерти з консультування, місцева адміністрація, спеціалізовані організації та ветерани з сім'ями
1	Підвищення кваліфікації фахівців для роботи з ветеранами (психологи та пді)	Соціальна робота	Кваліфіковані та підготовлені кадри, психологи	Адміністрація ПЗФ, місцева адміністрація, ВНЗ, місцева адміністрація, громадські організації та всі дотичні ветеранські організації та служби,
1	Створення та проведення програми лісової терапії (інфраструктура, навчені працівники)		Регулярне проведення заходів лісової терапії	Адміністрація ПЗФ, ВНЗ, психологи
2	Проведення дослідження проблем комунікації		Результати дослідження та пропозиції та рекомендації щодо вирішення проблем	Патронатні служби, ВНЗ, втеранські простори, фахівці медіа, експертні групи, органи центральної та місцевої влади, ветеранські профспілки, фокус групи ветеранів
2	Підготовка матеріалів та проведення тренінгів щодо комунікацій	Освіта	навчальні матеріали та навчені спеціалісти/залучені фахівці	ВНЗ, фахівці супроводу, громадські організації, ветеранські простори, фахівці медіа, експертні групи, органи центральної та місцевої влади, ветеранські профспілки
2	Медійна компанія із залучення комукаційних експертів та лідерів думок	Інше	підвищення рівня пооформованості серед ветеранів та їх родин і як наслідок збільшення рівня попиту на цільові послуги/ініціативи	Патронатні служби, втеранські простори, фахівці медіа, експертні групи, органи центральної та місцевої влади, ветеранські профспілки, ветеранів та їх родини, громадські організації, центри ментального здоров'я
3	Створення штатної одиниці	Інше	Покращення загального ментального стану працюючих ветеранів, членів їх сімей та	Керівний орган, Адміністрація ПЗФ, Центри зайнятості, щоб активува
3	Створення навчальних матеріалів та Навчання наявних працівникам базовим навичкам та правилам комунікації з ветеранами	Освіта	Адаптовані послуги до потреб ветеранів	Адміністрація ПЗФ, ВНЗ, експерти по роботі з ветеранами
3	Залучення психологів та експертів з різних видів відновлення на базі часткової зайнятості	Інше	Розширення списку послуг ПЗФ, Покращення загального ментального стану працюючих ветеранів, членів їх сімей та забезпечення надання послуг з відповідною адаптацією для втеранів та їх сімей	Керівний орган, Адміністрація ПЗФ, Мін Вет, МОЗ

Fig. 10. List of possible actions by the 'red' team.

The 'red' team identified all of its ideas as feasible under certain conditions:

- creation of an inclusive route (including forest therapy areas, a network of observation platforms, and the creation of a location for retreats);
- creation of a sports and children's playground;
- improving the qualifications of specialists working with veterans (psychologists and guides);
- creating and implementing a forest therapy programme (creating infrastructure, trained staff);
- conducting research on communication issues;
- preparing materials and conducting training on communication;
- media campaign involving communication experts and opinion leaders;
- creation of a staff unit;
- creation of training materials and training of existing employees in basic skills and rules of communication with veterans;
- involvement of psychologists and experts in various types of rehabilitation on a part-time basis.

05:38	СЕСІЯ 2			
5	1	2	3	4
Обрано	ІДЕЇ АКТИВНОСТЕЙ / ЗАХОДІВ В РАМКАХ ПРОЄКТУ	КАТЕГОРІЯ ІДЕЙ	ОЧІКУВАНІ РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ	ПАРТНЕРИ
	Проекти в повсякденній діяльності ПЗФ. Елементи повсякденної діяльності ПЗФ, де можуть бути залучені ветерани, як одноразово, так і систематично. Які ВИДИ АКТИВНОСТЕЙ можуть бути частиною програми?	оберіть категорію активності до якої відноситься ідея	Зазначте очікувані результати реалізації ідеї	Зазначте партнерів, які можуть сприяти реалізації ідеї
1	Створення програми заходів щодо соціальної адаптації ветерана	Соціальна робота	Повернення ветерана до цивільного життя	ПЗФ, реабілітаційний центр, ветеранські простори, фахівці супроводу ветеранів)
2	Проведення заходів роз'яснення щодо взаємодії суспільства з ветеранами (зустрічі ветеранів зі школярами та іншими групами, розробка інформаційних матеріалів та їх поширення)	Соціальна робота	Зміна свідомості та відношення до ветеранів в суспільстві	Медіа, ветерани, ветеранські організації, навчальні заклади
3	Проведення курсів для працівників організацій, що взаємодіють з ветеранами	Освіта	Всі задіяні працівники мають базові навички по роботі з ветеранами	Міністерство ветеранів, міжнародні організації, що мають досвід роботи з ветеранами
4	Розробка короткотермінових програм навчання для отримання кваліфікації з видачею сертифікату	Освіта	Можливість офіційного працевлаштування або перекваліфікації ветеранів	ЗВО, МОН
5	Використання інфраструктури ЗВО для облаштування хабів (використання поля для гольфу на базі школи КШЕ, бази практик)	Інфраструктура	Створення хабів або місць для зустрічей та проведення часу ветеранами	ЗВО, громада, ПЗФ, бізнес
1	Організація турів по ПЗФах, що включає природотерапію, агротерапію, ознайомлення з роботою працівників ПЗФ, участь в екоосвітніх заходах	Відновлення	Повернення ветерана до цивільного життя	ПЗФ, громади, бізнес

Fig. 11. List of ideas from the 'yellow' team.

The ideas from the 'yellow' team are as follows:

- creation of a programme of measures for the social adaptation of veterans;
- conducting explanatory events on society's interaction with veterans (meetings between veterans and schoolchildren and other groups, development and distribution of informational materials);
- conducting courses for employees of organisations that interact with veterans;
- developing short-term training programmes for obtaining qualifications with the issuance of certificates;
- use of higher education institution infrastructure to set up hubs (use of the golf course at the KSH school, practical training base);
- organisation of tours of nature reserves, including nature therapy, agrotourism, familiarisation with the work of nature reserve employees, participation in eco-educational events.

06:27	СЕСІЯ 3						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Відповідає потребам ветеранів?	2. Реально реалізувати в ПЗФ зараз?	3. Сильний ефект на відновлення/реабілітацію?	4. Це безпечно (низький ризик)?	5. Чи може охопити групу людей?	Висновок	Обрано	НОТАТКИ
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Реалістична	☐	
Yes	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	Можлива за певних умов	☐	
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Реалістична	☐	
Yes	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	Можлива за певних умов	☐	
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Реалістична	☐	
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Реалістична	☐	

Fig. 12. Determining the feasibility of the 'yellow' team's ideas.

The 'yellow' team identified two of its ideas as feasible under certain conditions and four as realistic.

07:27	СЕСІЯ 4		
№	ЯК ДІЯТИ?	ХТО ДІЄ?	ЧИМ ДІЯТИ?
Календарний план	ЗАВДАННЯ (як, в який спосіб реалізовувати)	РУШІЙНА СИЛА (ПУШЕР)	Інструмент участі
№1	Створення програми заходів щодо соціальної адаптації ветерана		
1	Підготовка та навчання працівників по роботі з ветеранами	Експерти	Звернення
2	Визначення локальних місць, які будуть використані як ХАБи	Керівництво ЗВО та ПЗФ	Звернення
3	Розробка програми відновлення (тури, агротерапія)	Експерти	Звернення
4	Створення кваліфікованих курсів	Викладачі	Звернення
5			

Fig. 13. List of tasks for implementing the first idea of the 'yellow' team.

СЕСІЯ 2

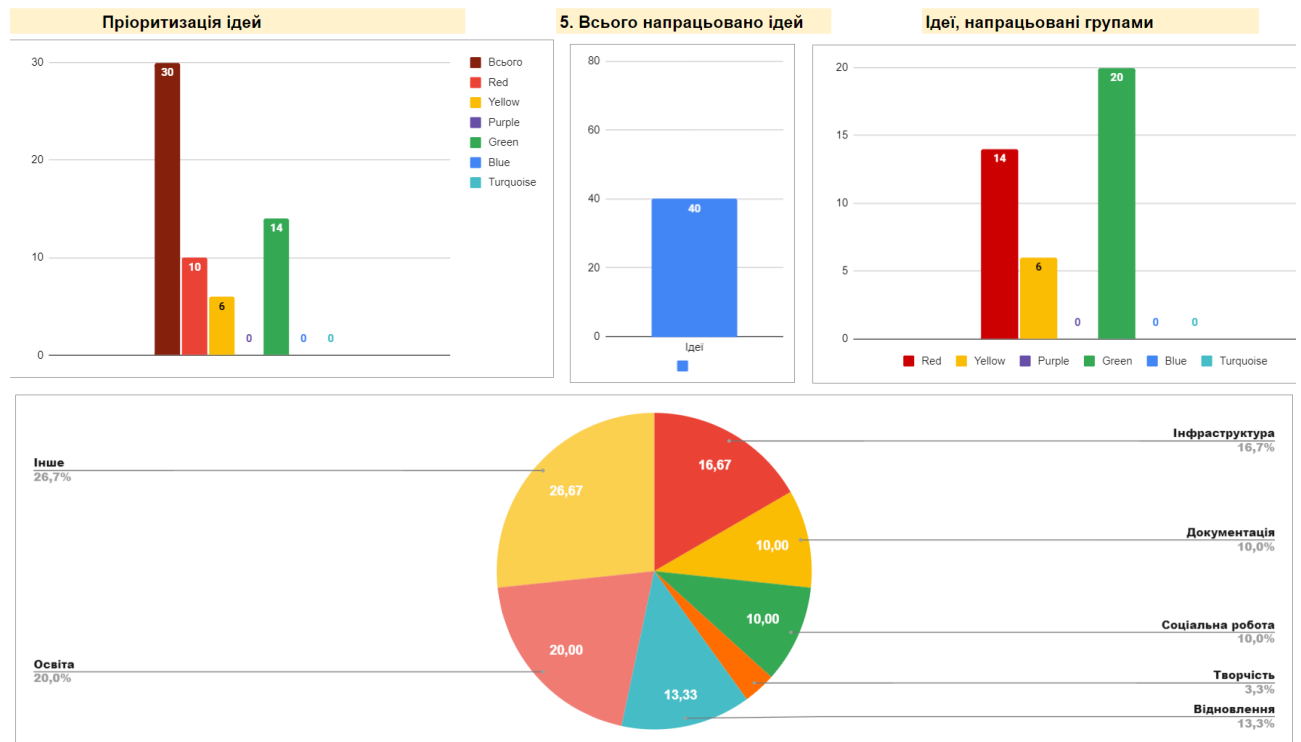


Fig. 14. Graphical representation of ideas generated by teams and categories.

СЕСІЯ 3

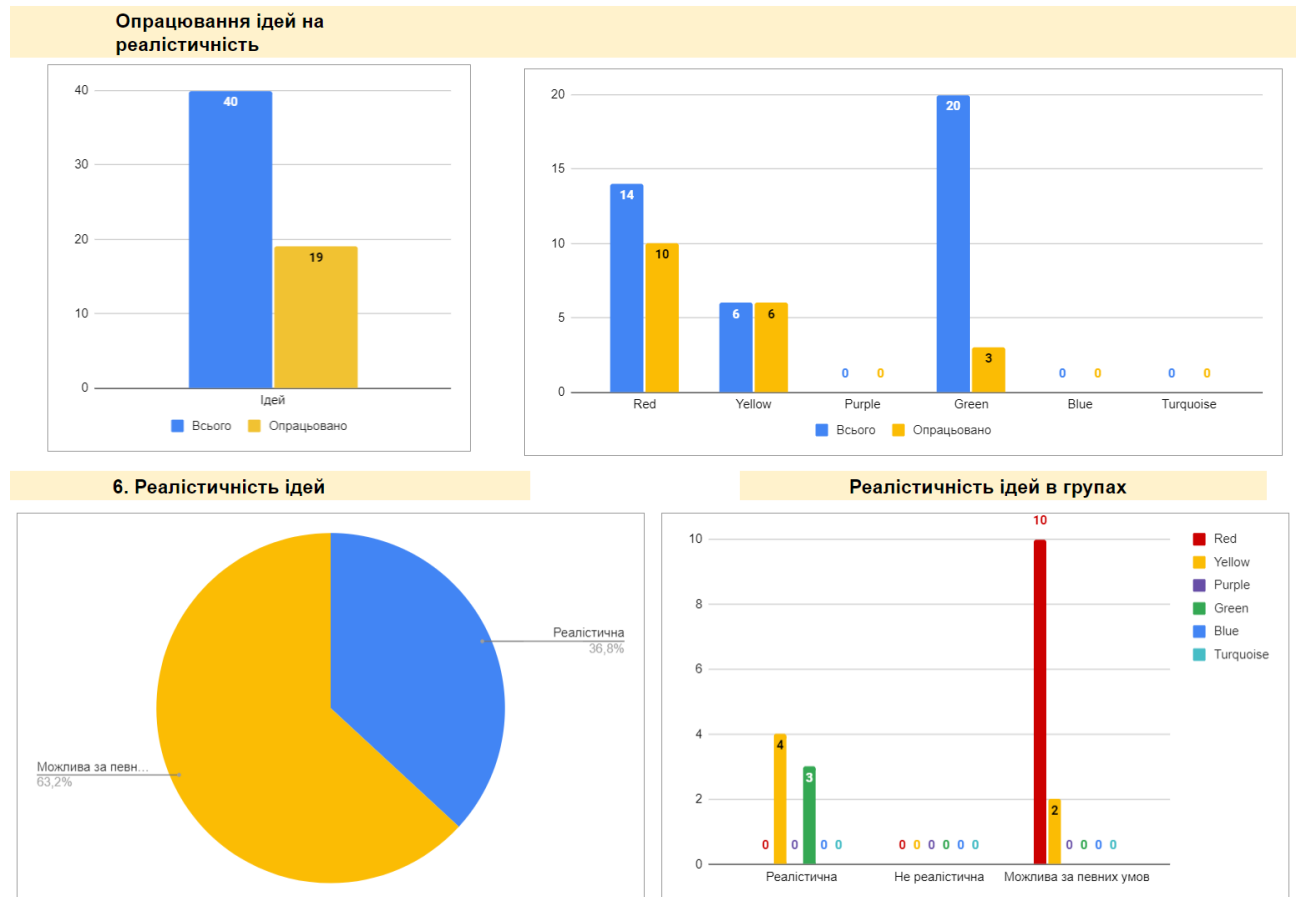


Fig. 15. Distribution of the realism of generated ideas and their distribution among teams.

Thus, the three teams identified the problems and challenges faced by veterans, their families, communities, universities, and NRF institutions when former military personnel return to civilian life and seek to find themselves in a 'new' environment, and developed ideas, goals, objectives, target audiences, and potential risks for future projects.



Fig. 16. Photos of workshop participants working in teams.



Fig. 17. Photos from a joint meeting and presentation of work results.

On the fourth day of the workshop a trip was organised to the village of Kvasy near Rakhiv, where participants enjoyed an exciting tour of the sanatorium 'Girska Tysa', talked to doctors, visited a museum and learned about craft production and the Rosental eco-farm.

The sanatorium uses centuries of experience in treating patients with the healing mineral waters of Kvasy and is a cosy place where you can relax and significantly improve your health. The main therapeutic factor of the sanatorium is the *unique mineral water* of the Girska Tysa deposit, which is extracted from its own artesian well.

The basis of sanatorium-resort treatment at 'Girska Tysa' is the comprehensive use of balneological, physiotherapeutic and phytotherapeutic methods and natural health resources. At the same time, factors that cannot be applied at home or in other institutions play a significant role, since the treatment methods at Girska Tysa are developed on the basis of preventive and health-improving medicine, which requires special conditions and highly qualified medical personnel.

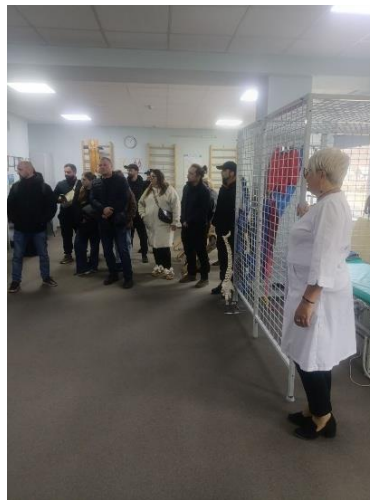


Fig. 18. Photos from the territory of the sanatorium 'Girska Tysa' in the village of Kvasy.

The last, fifth day of the event was devoted to individual working meetings, meetings with volunteers, and familiarisation with grant opportunities for the implementation of future projects.



Fig. 19. Photos with volunteers in Rakhiv.

Current initiatives for the rehabilitation of veterans

When studying Ukrainian initiatives for the rehabilitation of veterans through nature, one can consider the example of the non-governmental organisation Forest Com. In June 2025, they launched a project called ***'Green Journeys: FOREST for the rehabilitation of veterans and their families.'***

The aim of the project is to promote the psychological recovery and social adaptation of veterans and their family members through nature-based therapeutic activities in a forest environment.

Project objectives:

1. Organising a series of one-day trips to natural locations for veterans and their families.
2. Using forest therapy methods, which are scientifically proven to reduce anxiety, stress and PTSD symptoms.
3. Providing support from qualified specialists – psychologists, forest ecologists, ecotherapists, and rehabilitation specialists.
4. Creating a safe space for communication, support, and socialisation among participants, including family activities and therapeutic conversations.
5. Developing adapted formats for events in accordance with the needs of different categories of participants (veterans without children, families with children, young people).

The beneficiaries of the project are war veterans and their family members. Indirect beneficiaries include organisations involved in supporting veterans, psychologists and mental health professionals, and community initiatives involved in reintegration and recovery.

The planned outcomes are improved emotional well-being and reduced stress levels among participants, strengthened social ties among veterans and their families, and the development of a caring attitude towards their own physical and mental health.

The DoLadu Camp project is an innovative four-day programme of emotional recovery and psychosocial support for defenders and veterans based on the principle of EQUAL TO EQUAL.

The aim of this programme is to enable people with combat experience to feel safe among their peers, restore their own resources, realise their new skills and life goals, reduce stress levels, and gain motivation to be effective and economically viable. The project aims to address the mental health and reintegration issues of Ukrainian veterans in the Kyiv region, an area with a high concentration of veterans who often suffer from PTSD, depression and anxiety.

This event is held on the territory of ULIS (Dudky and Vorokhta). ULIS is a space in the forest with cottages and small houses for 1-2 people, where there is only silence and untouched nature. Here, veterans can both retreat into solitude and receive psychological help or useful information.

The Kyiv region has convenient transport links with other regions, which allows for wider access to the programme and creates conditions for supporting veterans from different parts of the country.

The NGO 'DOLADU', with the support of GIZ Ukraine 'Gender-sensitive approaches to mental health and psychosocial support in Ukraine', funded by the German government and the 'Dykhai' Charitable Foundation, follows the following principles in the field of mental health:

- strengthening mental health and psychosocial support systems by supporting veterans,
- promoting destigmatisation of mental health issues,
- promoting self-help practices.

The Kyiv School of Economics (KSE) is an example of training and retraining veterans. ***A Veterans Office*** was created on the school's platform to help veterans return to civilian life through the creation and development of their own businesses, educational programmes and consultations, and the development of the veteran community.

The Office's activities focus on business education, mentoring support for starting or developing one's own business, consulting on grant programmes, and providing legal, psychological, and career counselling with the support of the platform's partners.

The educational component includes bachelor's programmes (business economics, psychology, law, software engineering, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, etc.), master's programmes (business and finance economics, economic analysis, public policy and governance, urban studies and post-war reconstruction, social psychology, etc.) and short-term courses (education, media, data analysis, public policy and procurement).

KSE provides financial support to defenders and their children, as well as offering a range of other grants and scholarships to cover tuition fees.

Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University has a Veterans Development Centre, a Psychosocial Support Centre 'PSYLAB', and an Educational and Scientific Centre for the Conversion of Military Personnel and War Veterans as part of its structural divisions.

The objectives of the PSYLAB Centre are:

- to reduce the psychological impact of war on young people;
- to help all participants in the educational process maintain their mental and physical health;
- to provide support during the most difficult moments of life during military operations.

The main areas of activity of the Centre are:

- providing psychological support and socio-psychological adaptation;
- psychological education;
- prevention and treatment of PTSD;
- crisis intervention.

The target audience is students, academic staff, veterans and their families. Lecturers from the Department of Psychology and Social Welfare have been providing psychological rehabilitation services to military personnel and veterans since 2016.

List of activities carried out by the PSYLAB Centre:

1. Psychological rehabilitation of veterans and their family members in Poland, at the Caritas rehabilitation centre of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Warsaw-Praga, from November 2022 to January 2023.

2. Consultations focused on veterans to promote psychological assistance and the possibility of receiving psychological rehabilitation services for veterans and their families at the Zhytomyr Regional Employment Centre.

3. Support groups based at the Veterans' Home to strengthen relationships between parents and children. To shape people's core beliefs (the world is safe, I am good, nothing bad will happen to me), psychological support groups use the therapeutic books 'The Squirrel's Tail' and 'The Backpack'.

4. The 'Psychologist at War' project. Together with psychologists from all over Ukraine, students learned to provide psychological assistance to people affected by the crisis in wartime conditions.

The following activities are carried out to maintain mental health during wartime:

1) A series of training sessions for university students and pupils on developing leadership qualities, working on the ability to set goals and achieve them through healthy self-esteem, training sessions on developing resilience, stress resistance and the ability to supply resources.

2) The SCHOOL-UP programme, in which 2nd-4th year students participate, is recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Fourteen students are currently assistants to school psychologists in the city. The uniqueness of the programme lies in the implementation of the latest standards of neuropsychological distress correction.

3) The '8-step grief support programme'.

4) The 'Children of War' project, in which psychology students learn to provide psychological support, stabilise situations and acquire skills for overcoming tragic situations.

The Research Institute of Medical Technologies, Mental Health and Human Intelligence includes the following areas of activity:

- psychosocial support and counseling (Psychosocial Support Centre 'PSYLAB');
- coaching, theta healing and positive thinking ('MindShift' Coaching and Positive Development Center);
- telemedicine to ensure access to psychological and medical care;
- educational campaigns on modern medical technologies and their impact on health;
- inclusive education (Inclusion Hub Inclusive Education Center);
- professional development (Center for Continuing Education);
- technological solutions in the medical field (Center for Intelligent Solutions);
- medical robotics (MedRobotics Hub);
- mobile applications and digital platforms for monitoring and supporting mental health;
- international initiatives (Center for International Education and Science "GlobalEduScience Hub");
- intercultural communication (Language Hub, LangLab Translation Center).

Mission: Innovative education, research and practice for improvement.

Goal: To combine science, education and tools to create a harmonious society in which everyone achieves balance and personal maximum.

Vision: integrating knowledge and technology for a society that cares about physical, emotional, intellectual and social well-being.

Capabilities

Experience and expertise:

1. Implemented experience in psychological rehabilitation of veterans in Ukraine and abroad.

2. The Veterans Development Center has the ability to coordinate, engage, and disseminate rehabilitation interventions.

3. The Veterans Development Center has trained and certified the first group of veteran support specialists.

Institutional capacity:

1. The university has the opportunity to involve both its own departments and interested institutions in the region and coordinate their activities.
2. The university is a key regional link between the veterans center, NRF facilities, PSYLAB, and rehabilitation specialists.
3. It is planned to build a standard project of an all-Ukrainian network of veteran spaces - the Veterans Hub.
4. Cooperation has been established with key facilities of the NPF of the region and relevant communities.

Project ideas

Main tasks:

- 1) Prepare veterans for work in the field of environmental protection activities (ecological monitoring, care of protected areas, eco-education, ecotourism).
- 2) Provide psychological support and guidance during training and practical activities.
- 3) Create pilot programs for veteran employment in partnership with environmental agencies.
- 4) Involve local governments in supporting and motivating veterans through preferential programs, social initiatives, and grants for communities.

Concept of the approach:

- ❖ “From trauma to growth” — the veteran receives not only help, but also a new meaning through contribution to the common good. “Nature as therapy” — the use of the natural environment and practical activities as a tool for psychological recovery.
- ❖ “Learning through action” — learning is combined with practice in real-life reserve conditions.

The “Young Veterans. Ukraine” platform, with the assistance of the Patronage Service of the Ukrainian Navy, the NGO “SMART MEDIA” and the NGO “TIME OF ACTION”, invites veterans to join the Communication Platform for the Socialization of Veterans, where work is carried out with youth and veterans, psychological support is provided, assistance in finding a job, supporting the business of veterans, organizing a veteran training system, and creating a network of proactive veteran communities.

Veterans participate in community building:

- business support at the local level with the specifics of the region;
- veteran associations, coalitions and networking;
- involvement of veterans in policy creation.

Strengthening the community:

- cooperation of the authorities with veterans;
- leadership and advocacy training, community building;
- active communication component and veteran publicity;
- interviews and discussions are conducted: public dialogues and communication training.

The VETERANS Business Support Project has achieved results – 60 plans have been created, 10 businesses have been supported.

Julius Strauss, a former war correspondent, launched ***the Wild Bear Vets program*** in 2021 with a group of Canadian and British veterans to promote the benefits of natural rehabilitation in the same forests where he himself chose to hide from the horrors of war. For the second version of the program, he decided to turn his attention to Ukraine. As an experienced wildlife tracker, rafting guide, and conservationist, he saw an opportunity to help from home.

Mission: The program promotes the benefits of wilderness and nature-based therapy to help veterans recover from the trauma and psychological effects of war.

Location: The program is based at Wild Bear Lodge near the Selkirk Mountains in British Columbia, Canada.

Activities: Veterans participate in a variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, rafting, animal tracking, and search and rescue exercises, sharing military and wilderness skills with local guides and mentors.

Participants: The program has hosted veterans from various countries, including Ukraine (especially after the 2022 invasion), Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Impact: Participants noted that the program provides a unique sense of peace and camaraderie that can surpass traditional therapy, helping them find purpose and sustain their recovery through service to others.

Opportunities have been created for the rehabilitation of veterans and internally displaced persons on the territory of ***the National Nature Park 'Holosiivskyi'***:

- in 2024, a multifunctional information and recreation center was opened to provide environmental, educational and excursion services, taking into account the needs of wounded veterans;
- nature therapy: bird listening, tactile interaction with nature, civics;
- work with IDPs: environmental and educational activities allowed us to organize excursions and events for more than 500 children. These are children from Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions;
- excursions together with the NGO "I. Mariupol" (IDPs and family members).

In the future, it is planned to create barrier-free ecological trails, equipped places for rest and recovery: for picnics with the family, fishing, environmental education, and walks in nature.

Advantages:

- large city,
- accessibility for visiting,
- availability of professional help centers nearby,
- potential variety of activities.

Challenges:

- a large city,
- lack of professional training of employees,
- underdeveloped infrastructure in the park,
- lack of programs for outdoor activities,
- funding,
- indifference of the authorities.

The role of the Protected Area Research Community for Ukrainian Recovery (PARCUR) platform in supporting a joint scientific and practical approach to nature-based rehabilitation

The communication platform 'Protected Area Research Community for Ukrainian Recovery' (hereinafter referred to as the Platform) is a joint initiative that supports the ecological, social, and educational recovery of Ukraine through nature-based solutions, collaborative research, and international cooperation.

The Platform brings together partners from conservation agencies and universities to jointly develop and implement projects aimed at ecological restoration, biodiversity conservation, and community capacity building.

This initiative is co-financed by the European Union as part of an international project initiated by a joint team from the National Transport University and the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development.

The main areas of activity of the Platform are:

- promoting the restoration of a healthy and prosperous Ukraine by uniting protected areas and scientific institutions across borders. Promoting joint research, environmental restoration and inclusive education;
- promoting joint research in the field of ecosystem restoration, biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation;
- encouraging international cooperation between Ukrainian and global environmental and academic institutions;
- providing educational programs on IT, GIS and sustainable development to local communities and displaced persons;
- promoting the rehabilitation of veterans and their social integration through outdoor activities and immersive technologies (e.g. virtual tours of protected areas).

Link to the Platform: <https://www.parcu.org/en>.

Currently, about 1.3 million people in Ukraine have the status of a participant in hostilities, 130 thousand veterans have disabilities resulting from the war, and 5-6 million are the number of veterans, as well as members of their families and families of the deceased.

Having analyzed the capabilities of some institutions of the nature reserve fund (see Table 1), it can be noted that they can organize recovery programs in nature through eco-activities, hippotherapy, fishing, and tourist routes.

In turn, the community determines the areas of training for veterans and provides them with support during recovery (travel, accommodation, meals), and higher education institutions implement educational programs for veterans at the request of the community and involve them in educational and research projects.

For example, a rehabilitation center for the military has been created on the basis of the Shatsky National Nature Park (Melnykiv Forestry), which includes:

- hippotherapy - therapeutic horseback riding;
- blueberry berry patch - a plantation with environmentally friendly products;
- pheasantry - an aviary with ornamental birds;
- spruce nursery - for reforestation and decorative landscaping.

Table 1. Results of a survey of NRF institutions regarding the implementation of veteran rehabilitation activities on their territories

<i>Name of the institution NRF</i>	<i>1. Is the institution ready to join such an initiative?</i>	<i>2. Are there currently any rehabilitation programs based on this NRF?</i>	<i>3. Is it possible to develop rehabilitation programs based on the NRF? For example, interesting excursions in the forest, some small activities (for example, mowing the grass) or something else for recovery?</i>	<i>4. Is the institution able to accommodate a small group of people for a short-term stay for recovery purposes?</i>	<i>5. Is it technically possible to conduct classes and training on the territory of the NR? Are there premises, internet, electricity, a projector and laptops available?</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Chornobyl Radiation and Ecological Biosphere Reserve						It is impossible to do all of the above in the Reserve. We can do all of this outside the Reserve, in the local community.
"Roztochya" Nature Reserve	Yes					The only thing that limits us is point 4, as we are unable to provide veterans with accommodation and meals. However, there are small hotels in our town where, if funds are available, accommodation can be arranged.
National Nature Park "Desnyansko-Starogutsky"	Yes	Currently, five rehabilitation programmes are being developed at our facility. We have begun testing some of the programmes with internally displaced persons and people who have lost their homes.		The NNP has the capacity to accommodate a small group of people (up to 20 people) for a short stay.	Premises, internet connection, and some of the necessary equipment are available.	
National Nature Park "Synyohora"	Yes	Currently, there are no rehabilitation programmes based at the Park.	Yes, maybe.	Yes, it does, provided that adequate funding is available.	Yes, it is available.	If funding for these measures is received, the park is ready to participate.
National Nature Park "Hutsulshchyna"	Yes	Yes, rehabilitation is carried out at the equestrian centre of the NNP.	There is something.	Yes, it does.	Yes.	

Carpathian Biosphere Reserve	Yes	There is currently a DAAD project.				I am interested in this area of work because it is very timely right now, but when it comes to the specifics of the issue, we do not have a single psychologist or specialist for such matters... In addition, physical accessibility is poor and there are no facilities for people with disabilities, so we can only talk about psychological rehabilitation.
National Nature Park "Holosiivskyi"	Yes	We do not currently have any targeted programmes. However, we are working to create a barrier-free environment and plan to develop infrastructure that takes into account different needs. In addition, certain elements of rehabilitation and recovery are being implemented at the ski school.	We can develop such programmes on the basis of the NNP. More specific options (or proposals) need to be considered. In particular, work is underway to involve stakeholders in creating a barrier-free space (currently, up to three such spaces are being considered in different parts of the NNP with different specialisations), including activities.	If by short-term you mean 'during the day,' then yes. There is nowhere to stay overnight. But we plan to expand the infrastructure. In particular, barrier-free recreation areas, eco-trails, footpaths, and observation platforms.	It is difficult to answer about the technical feasibility. It will depend on the time structure of the programme and the number of people involved. Currently, the premises are small.	There is no understanding of what involvement will entail. In order to attract more Park employees to the project, they need motivation.

Shatsky National Nature Park	Yes	Targeted programmes are not currently being implemented, but the necessary conditions for organising recreational activities in nature have already been created.	"A rehabilitation centre for military personnel has been established at the Melnikivskyi Forestry, which includes: hippotherapy (therapeutic horse riding); a blueberry farm (an environmentally friendly plantation); a pheasant farm (an aviary with decorative birds); and a spruce nursery (for reforestation and landscaping). The following facilities are also available for recreation and leisure: ◆ Peremut Recreation Centre (area 33, section 7, area – 0.35 hectares) – a renovated short-term recreation centre in a pine forest with gazebos, walking trails and a quiet area. ◆ Forest Song Ecological Trail (length — 1.6 km) — a route through the forest with history, combining health, educational and cultural functions."	Yes, accommodation is available at the Polisyanky recreation centre, located near the Melnikivsky Forestry.	The forestry area has administrative buildings with electricity and basic facilities for meetings, training, and outdoor activities. In the future, there are plans to build a hotel. The park plans to build a hotel block based on the recreation centre. A building has already been identified that can be converted for this purpose. Work has begun on the technical documentation necessary for the complete reconstruction of the premises. To implement this project, the following is needed: funding (government programmes, donor and international funds); partnerships with civil society organisations and businesses; joint work on the concept of a space for rehabilitation and training.	
National Nature Park "Karmelyukove Podillya"	Yes	At present, the Park has already hosted nature therapy events for veterans, their families, and combatants. The programme included an excursion along the Vyshenka ecological trail, an outdoor lunch with delicious fish soup, fried potatoes and herbal tea, active games with children, nature exploration, hippotherapy, bird watching, and a master class on setting up and taking down tents.	Yes, it is possible to develop additional programmes, including walks in the forest, occupational therapy (e.g. mowing grass, working with horses, installing electric fences for grazing). In addition, there is an opportunity to hold master classes that combine practical activities with environmental education: in particular, making brooms for feeding wild animals in winter, clay modelling, weaving didukh and straw spiders, a master class in dendrology, setting up camera traps, as well as learning about local flora and fauna during excursions. Such activities not only contribute to restoration, but also help to form a deeper connection with nature and feel useful in preserving the environment.	The park has the ability to set up a tent camp in the Vyshenka tract with a summer shower, a place for personal hygiene and cooking. The only limitation is the lack of mobile communication, electricity and internet in this location.	Short-term training sessions can be held on the premises of the administrative building. There is a large pavilion for 50 people with the possibility of connecting a projector, internet, and chairs. There is also a small classroom for 10 people in the recreation and environmental education department with a screen, projector, and internet access. We also have pots, reusable metal tableware, tripods for cauldrons, sleeping mats (10 pieces) and tents for 35–40 people.	The park has Hutsul horses, which allows for the organisation of relaxation activities involving horse care, interaction with horses, and horse riding. To fully implement this part of the programme, it is necessary to purchase additional saddles, bridles, and pads, as the existing equipment is limited.

The communication platform PARCUR is a single digital space for veterans, researchers, organizations, and the public, providing access to events, opportunities, educational, and environmental initiatives.

Communication and collaboration are supported through the creation of personal and organizational profiles, joint projects and the exchange of ideas, and the involvement of veterans and partners in public and professional life through participation in events, training, and environmental activities. This is the formation of a community of knowledge around the topics of sustainable development, ecology, education and rehabilitation.

Ecological and rehabilitation component:

- VR tours of biosphere reserves and national parks;
- dissemination of knowledge about nature and ecology, promotion of psychological rehabilitation;
- posting information about events (online and offline) for veterans and other groups of people.



Fig. 20. Photo of the platform tab “Veterans Rehabilitation”.

Education and development:

- access to training courses;
- opportunities for professional and personal development of veterans.

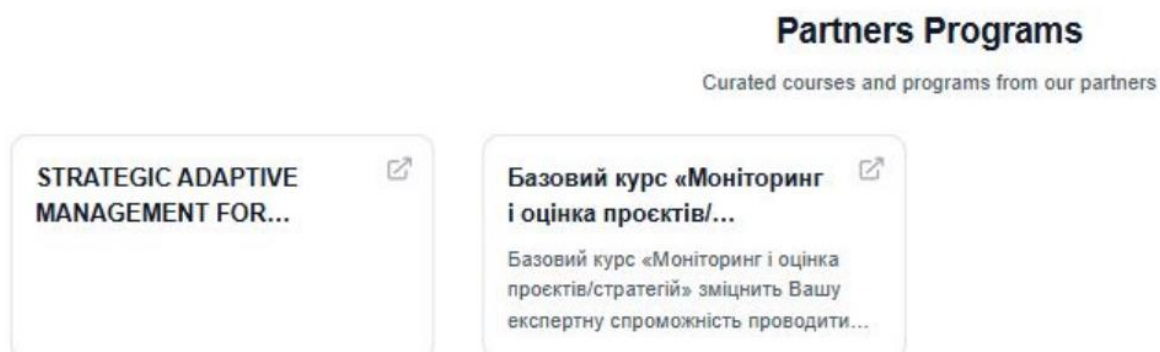


Fig. 21. Photo of the tab on the platform with links to educational courses.

Thus, it can be noted that the Platform is not just a catalog of events, but a multifunctional digital hub of an ecological orientation for veterans, organizations and researchers.

Results

The main result of the research is the creation of a broad network of opportunities for nature-based recovery for veterans. Through physical activity in nature, veterans can restore their mental health and engage in community activities.

By involving combatants in conservation work and the daily operations of biosphere reserves, national parks, and other environmental institutions, we can improve the psychological well-being of veterans, their families, friends, and communities. Every participant in the collaboration benefits — protected areas as institutions, volunteers, the community, and nature itself. A true mutually beneficial interaction.

This approach is based on the widely held fact that nature heals, which is supported by numerous scientific studies. It is important to use this and provide veterans with an additional tool to find their “new selves” as members of the community, valued and respected in civilian life. This step is undoubtedly better than plunging into alcohol or drug addiction.

Benefits for veterans and their families:

- community events and service provide a sense of meaning;
- an opportunity to try something new and gain new skills and competencies;
- a shift in mindset from “victim” to “decision maker”, “activist”, “community leader”;
- self-reflection and openness to sharing emotions and feelings;
- children see a positive example of environmental responsibility from their parents.

Benefits for the community:

- shared experience brings people together, increases social cohesion;
- a veteran becomes not a burden, but an important part of a renewed society;
- a veteran in a protected area shares and teaches others skills learned during service (e.g., tactical medicine, terrain orientation, etc.);
- there is a direct connection between physical activity, time spent outdoors, and local economic growth.

Benefits for conservation agencies:

- agencies gain potential new rangers who possess navigation, teamwork, and discipline skills;
- veterans can become ambassadors for protected areas and contribute physically or in office roles, depending on their previous experience;
- a person with a disability acquired during military service can find joy in meaningful work and rediscover themselves;
- the opportunity to conduct an honest audit of the accessibility of infrastructure and improve it.

Benefits for the army and state stability:

- ✓ another option for patronage services and civil-military cooperation that can be offered to personnel (including improved communication with local communities);
- ✓ veterans will not feel rejected, which will make it easier for them to decide to join or return to military service once they understand “what comes next”;
- ✓ veterans can refresh lost knowledge and skills (medical training, navigation, STEM).

Key findings and discussion

1. Networking. The conference successfully brought together representatives of different groups and provided everyone with the opportunity to talk about themselves and explore opportunities for long-term cooperation in order to identify common interests and 'points of contact.' Representatives from veterans, local communities, volunteers, conservation areas, educators, and NGOs gathered to discuss how and in what direction conservation groups should move toward using conservation areas for the recovery of veterans and their families. Undoubtedly, we will see the results of these conversations later in the form of implemented projects or joint initiatives.

2. Brainstorming and sharing best practices. Participants discussed ideas, plans, and priorities. Using the #DIY4Change tool, they reviewed project ideas, goals, objectives, target audience, and potential risks — an effective tool when time is limited, ideas are plentiful, and everyone needs to have a say. It is important to talk about visitor centers, hubs, and tourism products for veterans and their families right now. Veterans could know that “there is a place in the forest where you can always find your people” — where there is always someone and something interesting and useful.

3. Various speakers mentioned the importance of proper non-traumatic communication. Since everyday elements can trigger negative reactions in veterans: sometimes a campfire, the smell of the forest, dehydrated food can be associated with negative experiences in the past, these elements can involuntarily signal distress. Rangers, workers in protected areas, should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to notice changes in the behavior of the target audience and know how to respond, facilitate activities. It was recommended to involve psychologists/psychotherapists in group activities. The group also discussed the positive role that assistance animals play in community outdoor activities.

4. Advanced training to prepare for working with a new target audience. Conference participants emphasized the importance of learning the basics of rehabilitation or psychology to feel more confident working with veterans who have combat experience. As an option, it was suggested to create a two-week training course in collaboration with highly qualified experts in the field to provide the basics of trauma-focused work.

5. The main challenges were outlined:

- lack of infrastructure and full accessibility/inclusivity,
- lack of qualified specialists (including the lack of effective "protocols" for different situations),
- insufficient participation of veterans in decision-making processes,
- low motivation to participate due to lack of positive experience,
- weak interaction and exchange of experience both within and between groups.

6. Target Audience: veterans and their families, including veterans with disabilities, have been identified as a priority target audience.

7. Balance between leisure and responsibilities. The example of Julius Strauss from Canada illustrated how expensive it can be to take veterans out into the wilderness just for recreation. It was suggested that a balance be found between recreational and collaborative activities, where conservation agencies and parks systematically invite veterans as they help implement the institution's conservation strategy.

8. The project risks were outlined: low popularity of volunteering in general, stigmatization of psychological support, "just for show" projects (paper tigers), institutional unwillingness to

accept and attract volunteers, lack of qualified and motivated staff, physical and language barriers (in the case of European-led projects).

9. Stigma and mental fatigue. There is a low level of motivation for self-development among veterans, rangers, and their family members due to daily fatigue and a lack of information programs and strategic support.

10. The Importance of Adaptive Sports. Sports as a form of rehabilitation for veterans has a long history. Protected areas can be a venue for such sporting activities. However, the facilities and venues for programs often need to be adapted to work with the target audience.

Ideas for the next conference and follow-up events

1) Continue project planning. The workshop was too short to develop a single pilot idea or program for veteran volunteers in protected areas. Therefore, follow-up events should be organized to provide space and time for this.

2) Finding funding. Funding is always a challenge, but there are tools to solve it. A meeting with potential donors should be organized.

3) Formulate ideas for volunteering in protected areas. It was difficult to combine all the ideas into one plan due to the variety of directions and the current inability of institutions to accept volunteers (not only veterans, but in general).

4) Involve medical experts. It is important to emphasize that protected area managers and volunteers are not doctors and do not intend to replace them in providing natural solutions for veteran recovery.

5) Invite international partners. The first conference was attended mainly by representatives of Ukrainian protected areas. It would be useful to invite participants from EU institutions or reserves/parks from other countries to the next conference.

6) Employment of veterans in nature protection institutions. The topic of employment was only mentioned in passing, although it may be significant for veterans and valuable for nature protection areas.

Conclusions

Viam supervadet vadens — “He who walks, overcomes the road.”

Inclusive infrastructure in nature should already be available, and veterans and their comrades should participate in its assessment and improvement.

Community, conservation, and tourism staff should receive training in communication and psychology to provide a safe and welcoming environment for veterans. There should be clear protocols for different situations (including negative reactions and triggers). Therapy and rehabilitation should be provided by professionals, not rangers. Rangers and environmental educators can support this recovery process within the scope of their duties and skills.

Nature-based restoration works best when accompanied by meaningful volunteer work that benefits nature and the community. This can be physical work (trail maintenance), creative work (information boards, videos), or even research-related (species monitoring).

International partners and protected areas should be involved from the outset to share best practices and enhance social cohesion.

Now is the time to lay the groundwork for these programs: building relationships, defining volunteer roles, identifying institutional needs, developing policies, conducting research and analysis. It is necessary to build a network, a community, starting with the exchange of experiences, knowledge, protocols and safety practices.